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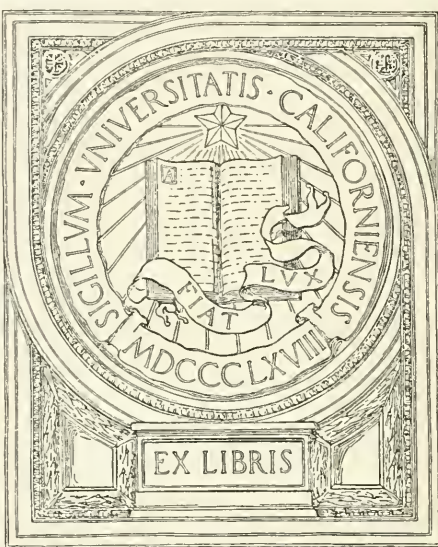


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An Inaugural Discourse

By
Sidney H. Marsh

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



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ROBERT ERNEST COWAN

AN

INAUGURAL DISCOURSE,

BY

SIDNEY H. MARSH,
PRESIDENT OF PACIFIC UNIVERSITY, OREGON.

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DISCOURSE.

Fellow Citizens :

TO-DAY, Pacific University commences its formal and public organization, accepts publicly and solemnly its responsibilities, and assumes a position from which there is no honorable retreat. After five years of preparation, of painful and strenuous effort, this institution takes a step in advance ; the idea of education has taken a higher form of development ; the Academy has become the College.

This occasion, and these exercises, therefore, in some sense inaugurate the Institution, and are of more importance than as concerning an individual, or an individual's usefulness. To speak, then, befittingly to the circumstances, to give utterance to the thoughts and feelings becoming the hour, one should bear all the joy for triumphs over past difficulties and for present prosperity, all the hopes and fears for the future, in his mind and upon his tongue ; joys, and fears, and hopes, great in proportion to the interests of education and learning concerned.

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He must express the exultation of those who, looking back to the childhood and youth of Tualatin Academy, rejoice at the promise of its opening manhood, as public hopes give place to public confidence ; while, in harmony with this feeling, he should also express the desires and hopes of those, who, aware of the difficulties and dangers that beset not so much its existence as its usefulness, would temper ardent wishes with prudent fears and cautious consideration.

And in such a strain of uttered feeling I would choose to address you, gentlemen, and as rejoicing upon a festival, let the feelings rule the hour, and find their most appropriate expression.

And what better suits our feelings for the past—in what fitter mode can a considerate and thoughtful joy express itself, what will give hope a loftier confidence, what nerve for more firm and resolute endeavor, than a consideration of what it is, that this and similar Institutions are established to realize,—what learning and liberal culture are, and what the value of their attainment. Let us then, with confidence in our convictions, and sure of our experience of what knowledge *is* and *does*, revolve before our minds, the facts that we believe, the truth we are acting upon, and leave to greater leisure and maturer deliberation to prove the one, or verify the other. I need to invoke a muse but seldom called to venture thus to become the oracle of the occasion. I need the confidence that strong convictions can alone give ; and believe me, I would not venture to give utterance to the *idea*, out of which this and similar Colleges grow as a tree from its root ; I would not attempt to define the character of an undertaking in which the public are so greatly concerned, if I believed that I were about to offer in-

dividual opinions and not demonstrable truth,—truth which the occasion makes appropriate, and which it is well to consider.

On the ground of the common want, which has led men to seek knowledge and establish Institutions of learning, and from the experience of the worth of the one and the benefits of the other to individuals and communities, I should be willing to rest all proof of the importance of learning, and of the means to support and advance it. Nor is this a feeble evidence. There is a sure knowledge, compared with which all logical conclusions, all theoretical statements are unsatisfactory and obscure. There are truths that we believe and act upon, that in the extent of their circuit can be touched only by the constantly moving radius of experience—experience defines by touching them—truths which in their entire unity and completeness we never comprehend, that like the circuit of the horizon are never obscure, but nevertheless cannot be all at one time seen. There are duties that we have found most advantageous, the reasons for which we do not know; fields of action most productive, which we have inherited and cultivate as our Fathers did, we know not why our lot is cast there. There is a wisdom that we all have, that we cannot understand, that like a public fountain supplies the can of every villager, and has enough even for the thirsty traveller. There is a public and common stock of truth, that like the common all sustaining air, we gladly and unquestioningly use, and never gainsay; there are rich experiences, of which each individual partakes; there are deep convictions of real and substantial good, which like the poet's inspiration, we cannot all express, nor all conceal, which are all-powerful with us, that control not merely momentary action, but life's labors, and without which all our life would be even more helpless and unproductive than it is.

What could we unassisted effect, were we thrown into the world without the guidance of those living *ideas*, those strong *convictions* of what is best, derived from former generations, from the race to which we belong, that direct our efforts and control our plans,—ideas and convictions, whether imbibed with our mothers' milk or developed by external influences, that we feel to be obligatory upon us—that, however originating, certainly owe their influence to our nature, and that we should be unnatural not to acknowledge. Such is the truth of the worth of learning. An undeniable impulse has driven man to seek it, and there is an innate respect for it. Whatever we may define it to be ; whatever particular advantage we may ascertain to accrue from it ; whatever power it may exert over the affairs of men ; however its importance may seem to vary, and its mere popularity wane or increase ; we still as scholars know its real unappreciable value, that “its price is above rubies, and that it is to be sought for more than hid treasures” ; and all men still respect and desire it. And on such grounds alone, satisfied with it for its own sake, and willing to labor for it for its own reward, we would rebuke all impertinent questionings, whether arising from the pride of ignorance, or the malignity of that leveling equality-loving spirit that would bring all superiority to its own level, especially the superiority of the good. Surely wisdom should be justified of her children.

For after all, the essential of true learning is *wisdom*. For the right love of knowledge originates in an innate striving, and earnest aspiration after excellence,—through increased knowledge of the circumstances in which we are placed, and of our own nature and end—a striving often manifested in all man's history. For from experience, felt within himself or observed in others, the scholar, the true one, knows that its importance can-

not be measured by all the aids that science has furnished industry ; that it is not proportioned to the pleasure that literature and poetry afford ; nor to be valued by the consolations of Philosophy.

There is a necessity which neither profits nor pleasure can satisfy, and for which all *art* and *science* are inadequate. It is this want that true and genuine learning would seek to satisfy. We need, as rational and accountable beings, surrounded by the fogs of sinful ignorance, a light that shall dispel darkness. Lost like a traveller amid the tangled jungles of tropical regions, we need a guide to the mountain summits and the open ways. We need a knowledge of ourselves and our circumstances, of men and things. We need the light that investigations into the laws of language and laws of thought may perchance give us. We need to know what principles, and whence, have governed men in divers countries and different ages, and under varied circumstances ; perhaps from *such* a study of *history* we may better know ourselves. These studies are indeed valuable for other ends, but chiefly because they tend to satisfy the craving thirst for knowledge, which our souls demand, not for their pleasure, or temporary happiness, but for their permanent well-being. I know that there is much thought and intellectual activity which does not, and cannot satisfy these spiritual cravings, which is a wandering of the intellect to and fro in the earth without any ascension above it. There is much acquisition that is not true *knowledge*, much theorising that does not really increase the insight. The history of literary men is full of evidence of misspent power, power misspent for the great purposes of thought, though not unfruitful perhaps in inferior, temporary, and temporal good. We have painful evi-

dences of the unsatisfactoriness of thought not rightly directed in minds delicately organized, where the cause of need was perhaps obscurely felt, where the insufficiency of all their efforts wrung tears and groans, clothed tho' they were in the most lovely garb of imagination and poetry. Such spirits have felt the inaptness of their own theories as an increase of their sufferings and want. Their own thoughts have thus returned to sting them, and driven like the daughter of Inachus, they have sought in vain during a life of flight, a Prometheus to reveal a future release from their sufferings. Such have been many among the Germans, who have spent a life in theorising, and, although ever unsatisfied with their own efforts, have still been compelled to theorise right on. Such have been many among the English, such, many among our own people, who like Shelly and Keats, most sad examples, were "pard-like spirits, beautiful and swift," who, "Actæon-like fled far astray, and as they wandered o'er the world's wilderness, their own thoughts along the rugged way pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey." But such misdirections of power, such consequent uselessness of knowledge for all its higher ends, far from disproving its spiritual purpose, indicate rather the connection, the dependance upon, the subservience of the intellect, considered as a faculty, to the spirit and its wants. For without some spiritual initiative, all thought in the higher departments has been ineffectual, and a life spent in theorising has produced no enduring results.

The intellect as a faculty has a power of its own, and by its power over nature and the affinity of its laws with the Divine Intelligence, proves the dignity of its possessor, and teaches us to infer, what every man *instinctively* believes, that the longings,

the instincts, and the wants of man himself, give the noblest the only proper employment, for each and every faculty. Yes! the purest, the loftiest, the most stirring purpose, that which, excites every faculty most fully, is to make *ourselves* better, more divine;—and in doing this, can we separate from us the power of intelligence? or is the faculty of thought to be set aside to perform some unessential function, or pursue some object outside the soul, to be employed for some economical or secondary end—to reduce nature in its varied phenomena to scientific laws—to write history to gratify our curiosity, or poetry to delight us?

There is an opinion that would sever thought from spirituality, knowing from being, and that consequently would confine the intellect to certain duties of arranging and systematizing, or limit it to what is called practical science. An opinion, the offspring of modern infidelity and materialism, that,—while ignoring the spiritual divine calling and destiny of man, and making him but little better than the brutes,—would degrade the intellect to its service by a few flattering words, such as *practical utility, human comfort and happiness*—words well enough in their way,—and the intellect, like a strong slave galled by the remembrance of lost nobility and freedom, even under these circumstances, asserting its higher dignity, has astonished the world by the vastness of its Herculean labors; by the glittering and gorgeous systems it has erected; by the extent of its scientific excursions and discoveries. But in all this display it has never been, in reality, half so august and grand, as when employed in its proper sphere, and engaged in subordination to, in harmony with, as constituent of, the rational common sense, the religious sense of the race. True learning

is far more than *such* intellectual activity, and the true power of the intellect far more than such strength of mind. True learning implies more than discipline of talents. It implies a culture of the rational and more inaccessible powers of the soul. It must affect the judgment, and the powers of imagination and feeling, and the moral sense. It would more nearly conform to Sir Philip Sidney's definition: That learning enlarges the memory, enlivens conceit, and strengthens the judgment. It is not the cultivation of a single faculty, but enlarges the being and powers of the whole man. It pre-supposes the great essentials of humanity, the religious nature of man, as well as the faculties of the understanding. There is not a power that it does not call into exercise and develope, and yet further, there is no growth and development without it. It subordinates all faculties and gifts. It is not therefore mere erudition, mere acquisition, that we would call learning. It is by study, *by* the use of books, in which are recorded principles, either formally expressed, or embodied in the varied forms of art. But the *end* is the perfection of the man.

No ! It is for no low servile needs, much less for the lower ends of pleasure or profit that the true scholar labors. Led by purer impulses, he aims for the one the only end that is worthy of human effort, that *truth* which elevates by its possession, which enlarges the *being* of the man, and makes him more conscious of what he is and what he may become, which makes him truly conscious of *himself*. The true scholar, whether he wanders amid the exuberant growths of literature, or travels along the strait, steep, rough road of pure science, or risks life and health among the unhealthy bogs and treacherous quicksands of Philosophy and Metaphysics, has still the same high

end in view—the lofty summits bathed in perpetual light—where, as under some polar sky, he can see the sun go round and round in undiminished unclouded splendor, and never set.

Such a view of learning, as having a spiritual, a religious purpose, is verified by the fact, that the great teachers among men have always made the investigation of moral and ethical questions, the great object of their teaching. Among the heathen even, we find this religious aim of thought acknowledged more or less consciously. The heaven-descended *gnōthi seauton* was accepted as the great end of study—and Plato, “the Attic bird, that in the olive groves of Academe, trilled his thick warbled notes the Summer long”—Plato after years spent in visiting the most famous resorts of learning, returned to Athens to instruct her sons in moral truth, and by a logic quickened and guided by exalted ideas in the master’s mind, to aid them both to discern “the true, the beautiful and the good,” and also to detect the sophistry and lies of those false guides, who would increase the power of evil passions, and of the evil heart, by false theories, and obscure the true beauty of virtue, by setting up the false splendor of their sophistical and inconclusive reasonings. In the middle ages and at more recent periods, the revival of letters has been contemporaneous with a deeper religious fervor, and, in all times, those learned men have been esteemed the greatest,—not perhaps the most erudite, but the greatest,—who have carried into all their studies such an exalted religious purpose, and have made it the controlling power in their lives and labors as scholars, as well as in the ordinary walks of life, ever keeping in view *truth* as their end.

It would be wrong to infer that such a controlling, pervading

feeling, such a sincere and earnest seeking of truth, is at variance with anything intrinsically beautiful or really strong and excellent, or opposed to any true and legitimate impulse of undepraved humanity. No: it could hardly be, that that which improves the general health, should be unfavorable to the health of any function, that the whole man should be aroused to the greatest exertion, and any faculty be lethargic. None are so quick to perceive, so apt to appreciate all that is beautiful in Art, or elegant in Literature, or profound and accurate in Science and Philosophy, as those who seek knowledge in its highest and purest sources, who are most imbued with the true spirit of the genuine scholar.

I know that in thus representing learning, I am speaking of the *ideal* rather than the actual, of what *should be*, rather than of what is. I do so, *because the ideal must always control the actual, if there is to be any right acting.* There are no scholars that are entirely actuated by such pure motives and impulses; there are none of whom it can be said, that all their knowledge has increased *wisdom*, and in whom all acquisition goes to the building up of the symmetrical man; very few of whom it can be said, that all their knowledge tends to *edification*. And yet, all will admit that it is only as knowledge, (as was said of Chief Justice Story,) has descended from the memory to the judgment, that it is of real value. All that is truly valuable in what is called learning, is really so, only as it becomes in the soul practical wisdom. It is this ideal of excellence as the reward of labor, that in all the really great, who have been benefactors of the race,—this ideal, as an “*aliquid immensum infinitumque*,” that has impelled them to become such.

The depravity and wickedness of man has always led the many to turn away from the excellent. Yet what should be the great purpose of man as man, is still the means of, an instrument in the scheme for, his restoration. Our fall and the curse of sin did not extend to a degradation below the human, and the acts and exercises that become the undegenerate, and the spirits of the just made perfect, are still the acts and exercises that become man even as he is. It is only as we look at all human purposes and modes of action in the light of man's proper humanity, that we can determine them at all. We are otherwise as unsettled in our principles as we are deficient in our lives. There is no progress without true knowledge, and on the other hand, there is no true knowledge without progress.

Such views of knowledge are not mere abstractions. Excuse me, if I have seemed to refine statements too far, and to have darkened truth with words. My purpose has only been to limit and define it. For it is not a theory but a practical truth, that works out into most important and strictly consequential results. However dark the root, the flower opens to the day. For, while it affects at once all our modes—our whole system of instruction,—it gives a dignity and excellency, a deep importance, to the whole subject of education, and exalts it at once to the highest position. It affects our system and our modes both positively and negatively, by making some things necessary and rejecting others as inexpedient to the end desired. It affects positively by requiring that the studies shall be truly *educational*, that is drawing out and not cramming in, as is too frequently the case. That the whole tenor of them shall be especially to make thoughtful men; men who will seek to find the principles that govern and the laws that control; that

cannot act from impressions, or be unmoored from all their fastenings by excitement, and carried away by an *opinion* framed for temporary convenience. It requires a system that shall make men of liberal views, and at the same time of decided and established character. It would make our Colleges and Schools subservient not merely to the State, to a party or sect, but first of all to truth and to God. In our country its influence is especially needed. Here where are so many parties, and where the contest for party power is terrible in its effects, upon even the highest and most sacred interests; where party rage like the Titans of old, seems ready to scale heaven itself; where every institution is liable to its depredations, and nothing is so sacred that it can hope entire exemption from the pollution of its touch; where the best men are dragged into *party* measures even against their will; any system or institution will be seized upon, even though the last hope of the Church or State, if for one instant it is severed from, not protected by the active and vigorous life and strength of the principles on which, and for which, it was established; if there are not intelligent friends who understand its true character, and will exert efficient energy in preserving that life and strength healthful and unimpaired. To-day in many of our States, this idea seems to have left the guardians of the common schools, while a new interpretation of their purpose is presented and urged by a powerful sect, sustained by others for party ends,—that schools are to educate *citizens*, and that consequently all that does not fit a man for what are commonly considered citizen's duties, to pursue the common avocations, and fill his place in a particular sphere, is unnecessary and to be rejected. As if such a partial education could be given without detriment to the State—which

demands *whole* men, fully grown, of the full stature of all manliness and virtue, as her citizens, that she may unfold all the excellence and glory of a perfect commonwealth. And the first step in furtherance of this view is to banish the Bible and prayer: both of which, in the view of wisdom and experience, have been deemed essential to a school system. For no book is better fitted than the Bible to exert the highest educational influence; and so far from being rejected, should rather be more intimately used in the details of an educational system—"Since no book contains more profound history, more sublime poetry, more accurate and discriminating biography, than the *Bible*."

But it is when these *ideas* of learning are carried out fully in instruction,—when applied by the discreet and experienced teacher, not only to affect a limited system, adapted to or restrained by external necessities, as is the case with our common schools; but to give life and character to a system, which aims at the realization in others of all that true learning can bestow; when applied in the education of the choice spirits, "Who in the prime of early youth, wisely have shunned the broad way and the green, and labor up the hill of heavenly truth,"—it is then that we should expect to find in the results, an evidence of the intrinsic worth of learning.

The University and College systems are avowedly for the accomplishment of this object. They are to advance true learning—they acknowledge no other end. Still they do not in any case fully meet the requirements of the ideal, which nevertheless pervades them. In this country they are cramped with poverty, and in the hurry and rush of men for the spoils of wealth and power, they find few who will heed their counsel, and

follow far enough in the pursuit of knowledge. And in Europe the systems, though grand and well nigh perfect in their design, have fallen in too many cases into the hands of false friends, or false enemies—and been turned like a destructive engine against the cause they were designed to aid. But imperfect as they have been, their influence has been vast enough to justify our judgment of their importance.

In every age, instruction given by the wise and good has been productive of most beneficial results, sometimes staying by its warnings even the downward heedless course of a sensual and headstrong people,—and gilding with the splendors of philosophy the rough iron of a tyrannous period, or as its greatest blessing, leaving the truth either grafted into the minds of a silent few, to “grow there and to bear,” or deposited in books a most precious legacy to future generations. But in modern Europe, for the first time, systems were established having in view this religious, this Christian end of learning—that, adopting whatever of value was left from more ancient times and systems of mere discipline, still kept in view the higher purposes of knowledge.

And what is there of value in modern society and civilization, in Church or State that does not owe much of its excellence to them? The great principles of civil liberty originated in the thoughtful minds of the scholars of Europe. It was in those same resorts of learning too, that not only the true principles originated, but there, in contact with the wisdom, experience and recorded greatness of the past, men learned to love the truth so as to live by it, and when called upon, nobly to die for it. The first great martyrs of truth in the middle ages, men whose burning kindled a fire that all the blood shed by

tyrants has not been able to extinguish—men graduates of European Universities. There too the same love of truth originated and maintained in spite of persecution, the importance of free discussion and the right and duty of independence in thought and opinion.

Literature, Science, Government, Philosophy and Theology, all acknowledge in Institutions of learning their fostering mother. And not these departments of study alone—but the society itself in which, as in their soil, they grow, owes its character and constitution to the practical truths which have thus been placed in it, as the suitable elements to support the growth of virtue and public civility. And how was this done? By rules published authoritatively? by written statements or learned discussions? So in part—but mainly by living examples, living oracles: by *men* exhibiting the results of a noble and manly culture. By men, who, trained in the retirement of a College, during the period when their character and principles were forming, went down into the active scenes and affairs of common life, to the Senate and the Bar; into the pulpit, and to the walks and pursuits of science, and to the common stations of usefulness, armed with truth and equipped with *principles* in the intellect and the heart. Men quick to perceive, wise to judge, prompt to act, patient and resolute to endure. Whoever else may have been distinguished—whatever other characters may have acquired in those celebrated institutions power for mischief instead of good—still history will confirm the fact—the exceptions at least do not disprove the rule,—that true men and their influence have far exceeded the evil.

Who shall measure the influence of such profound and cultured minds, through a long life vigorously active upon other

minds ; what fields are not now blooming, or growing golden for the harvest, of which the original seed came from some good man's hand, it may be, ages since. For any truth, any principle once expressed, has an abiding ceaseless power whose consequences shall extend to the end of time—and beyond it.

In our country the results of the college system have not been different. Indeed our Colleges have been more entirely imbued with the *idea* that has been expressed, than the Universities of Europe. The great object of fitting men for practical duty has been more definitely avowed. The call for men to the work of life has been indeed so great, that it has been difficult to restrain the young long enough to prepare them for the responsibilities that here more than elsewhere press upon active laborers. But where, after all, have there been men in whom learning has more completely perfected its design ? Where, those in whom there has been such complete harmony between acquirements and gifts, between exalted power of mind and simplicity of character ; where, men imbued with more real practical wisdom, whose real greatness as far exceeds in splendor the flashy smartness of mere talents, as does the light of the Sun the star that shrinks at its approach ? So universal and all prevalent with us is this influence of Institutions of learning, that we are hardly aware of its extent and power. But the watchful observer from the facts around him, and the philosophic thinker from the operation of known laws, would rightly infer that all that we most value in the present, and are most proud of in the past, and all that furnishes a rational ground of hope for the continuance of our blessings, and the future progress of our people—that all this has been, and must be, more than to any other instrumentality, due to our American Colleges.

And how can it be otherwise, if they are the nurseries of knowledge and wisdom as we have supposed ;—is not wisdom to be esteemed pre-eminently the stability of *our* times, and must not such an influence be felt from the hundreds of young men, who yearly go from college to the utmost corners of our land ? They carry principles and truths, which by contact merely would be felt, acknowledged, adopted and applied, and would become operative for permanent good. But when enforced from the pulpit, sustained by the courts, taught in our schools, and disseminated by the press, they become the controlling principles of society

In this Institution we humbly hope, that this idea of a true and manly culture may be realized. It is a purpose which calls for all our energy, a design large enough to employ all our philanthropy. Were it merely to teach the sciences and formal knowledge—to lead the young and susceptible mind along flowery walks to the grander and more sublime aspects of literature, poetry and science, its establishment would be of interest and importance. But when we consider that the design involves not only the discipline of talents, but the evolution of character,—when it is remembered that young men, the choice spirits of the land, the hope of the country, are to receive both the preparation that shall make them good soldiers in the battle of life, and the skill to manage the evolutions, and control the movements in the conflict—that to make MEN, and not mere scholars is our purpose—that this is not with reference to this class or the next, but is to be a continued influence when the grave shall have received all of us—when we think of the place, the time, and the circumstances—that we, here, almost within hearing of the roar of the Pacific, in this land so recently

a wilderness ; that we, the first, not in haste, but with deliberation, and to meet the exigencies of the country ; not heedlessly, but prayerfully, are publicly organizing a College — we feel that neither energy nor philanthropy nor any human power can suffice to accomplish what is undertaken. We feel it a privilege as well as a duty to be able to commit this Institution, consecrated in its infancy, now, in the first flush and vigor of manhood, to that God who *has* guarded and guided, and who will, we hope and pray, yet crown it with his praise.

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